

Non-Subscribing Presbyterian

No. 79

JANUARY 1914.

PRICE ONE PENNY.
Is. 6d. per annum post free

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Notes of the Month.

In beginning with this issue another year of our existence, we wish to be the medium of the heartiest good wishes for the work of our congregations and the welfare of their members. May the former during the New Year be rich in results for the glory of God and the service of man, and may all who co-operate therein be blessed with the assurance that they have worthily contributed to that great end. We trust that, ere 1914 has run its course, much will have been attempted and much accomplished in every part of God's great vineyard.

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Speaking for those whose object it is to make this magazine more and more the mouthpiece of our Church and an

increasing power for good as an instrument in its service,* we may say that it will be our endeavour to increase the attractiveness, as well as the usefulness, of *The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Magazine*. The fact that it has now been in existence six and a half years seems to indicate that it has proved of assistance to our community, and we wish to acknowledge that fact not only with gratitude, but with a greater sense of responsibility. As an earnest thereof, we would make reference to the articles contained in this issue, representing the views of different contributors on the subject of "Our Church and its Outlook." We trust that they will be found a source of suggestion and inspiration to all desirous of seeing our Church increasingly successful. With February, we hope to begin a series of articles dealing with the fundamentals of our free faith in the light of modern thought and research. We would bespeak for them the careful consideration of all our readers.

* *

The autumn season has been rich in remarkable books, and in no department of literature has the output been more notable than in that of biography. Perhaps most eagerly anticipated was "Scott's Last Expedition," a book which tells in a fascinating way a story of signal heroism. Of no less appeal to many of our readers will be Sir Edward Cooke's splendid life of Florence Nightingale. A perusal of its pages clearly reveals a woman of most remarkable character and achievement, who was responsible for reforms as far-reaching as they have been

beneficent. Seeing how much has been said and written about her religious predilections, the following may be of particular interest:—"Excellent . . . was the answer given by an Irish clergyman when asked to what sect Miss Nightingale belonged—'She belongs to a sect which, unfortunately, is a very rare one—the sect of the Good Samaritan.' Miss Nightingale was by descent a Unitarian, by practice a communicant of the Church of England, but she was addicted neither to High Church nor to Low. Her God was the God of moral law, a God of infinite pity and benevolence, but also One who worked out His purpose by the free will of human instruments. Her service of God was the service of man, and her service of man mingled efficiency with tenderness." ("The Life of Florence Nightingale," vol. i., p. 246.)

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To many who read this Magazine the centenary volume of the Royal Belfast Academical Institution will be of considerable interest. Most handsomely got up, it presents pictorially, as well as graphically, a period of great historical progress and development seen not alone in the record of a prominent educational institution, but also in that of the community where it has played so important a part. Among the masters whose work is recalled are some associated with our own religious community, while in the list of old scholars are names perfectly familiar because of their connection with one or other of our North of Ireland congregations. It is because the ties between the school and our Churches have been so numerous and so intimate that we have perused its pages with the most eager interest, and are glad to have elsewhere in this number an opportunity for dealing with a notable publication at greater length and in more detail.

* *

In an address, given on the occasion of a presentation to the Rev. Wesley Guard on his retirement, Sir William Whitla said that "Mr. Guard's creed and practice might be summed up in the lines—

"Our Father, while our hearts unlearn
The creeds that wrong Thy name,
Still let our hallowed altars burn
With faith's undying flame.
Not by the lightning gleams of wrath
Our souls Thy face shall see.
The star of love must light the path
That leads to Heaven and Thee."

Coming from such a staunch Methodist as Sir William Whitla, this expression of the theological outlook may be taken as acceptable to many members of that Church. It marks a distinct advance by which the old orthodoxy has been left far behind and a better vision of God obtained.



OUR CHURCH AND ITS OUTLOOK: A SYMPOSIUM.

By Rev. M. S. Dunbar, M.A.

We are entering upon a new year, and at this time it is customary in all departments of life to look forward and derive what hope and stimulus we can from the prospect. Many think that the ultimate destiny of our Church is to be absorbed in the larger free communion which it is at present helping to create. But it is not likely that we shall live to see that day, and meanwhile our duty is to support and interest ourselves in those Churches which rightly claim the distinctive title of non-subscribing. We ought to have a certain amount of sympathy for all Christian denominations which are in one or other respect helping on the coming of God's Kingdom, but if we believe in the fundamental principle of our own Church, which is held consistently by no other, it is our plain duty to adhere to it and maintain it, though other Churches may have many attractions. There are strong temptations to forsake our little religious communities. We cannot, as a rule, have fine architecture and music, nor have we numbers—nothing but freedom to offer those who are seeking a religious home. And here, too, the popular Churches have stolen a march upon us. Many of them have opened their doors freely to all, asking no questions as to their religious opinions. They have given freedom to the people,

but retained their creeds for the ministers. Thus they have checkmated our free Churches, though we believe that ultimately it will be fatal to their creeds, for free hearers cannot long endure to listen to fettered teachers.

While we have reason to be disappointed at the slow progress we have made, some of the causes of which I have hinted at, there are some grounds for encouragement.

The Sustentation Fund, which will come into operation this year, will help to some extent to relieve many of our ministers from financial anxiety. The fact that we have this fund encourages us in looking to the future. For though there will always be young men, lovers of truth and freedom, who will be willing to make many sacrifices in order to engage in the work of the ministry, there is a limit to this self-sacrificing zeal, and it may become difficult to find men for our Churches if a living wage cannot be obtained. The Sustentation Fund is a step in the right direction, and adds to our confidence in the future. Again, a strong conservative feeling, I think, characterises the Irish people as a whole. This works against us in adding new members to our Churches, but it works in our favour in retaining the members we have. The people are attached to the place where their forefathers worshipped and around which they are buried. The farmers are permanent on the land, and may be reckoned on to abide in the denomination in which they have been reared. We can then pretty well trust in the continuance of the numbers we have. But so long as the great bulk of the Protestant population seem not to think that any further development of religious thought is possible or desirable than that from Roman Catholicism to ordinary Protestantism, I cannot regard conversions to our free form of Christianity as very hopeful.

One of the most encouraging features of our Churches is our Sunday Schools. There are no more hearty and enthusiastic meetings in our Body than those which are held in connection with them. With over 1,400 scholars to

train up in our simple and noble faith, in the love of truth and in freedom as the only means of attaining it, in the love of the Heavenly Father and in reverence for Jesus Christ, in the belief in the brotherhood of man, Christian service and universal toleration and charity, we should all be ready to take our part with faith and courage in the work which lies before us.

By Rev. J. A. Kelly.

An intelligent optimist never ignores facts, and it appears to me to be impossible to speak or write about the outlook of our Church without frankly acknowledging how widespread is the fear that the proposed legislation for Ireland is full of grave danger for our happiness and success in the future. The members of our congregations in the past have been in the very front in regard to all the reforms that have blessed our country. They have been prominent in their advocacy of Roman Catholic Emancipation, Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Church of England in this country, Land Reform, Local Government, and other beneficent measures, and in their noble fight they have often been opposed to the policy of other Churches of the Protestant faith; but to-day the majority of them stand shoulder to shoulder with those in opposition to the "Bill for the 'Better' Government of Ireland," believing in their inner hearts that such a measure, if passed into law, will work great evil for the principles of civil and religious liberty, which all in common stand for. While, therefore, the New Year opens with a dark cloud across the sun, let us not forget that the sun, though hidden from view, will shine upon us again in all his glory; and at the same time, let us not shut our eyes to the silver lining of the dark and threatening cloud. The members of our congregations can no more ignore the present conditions than they can the air they breathe, and as they love their country and their Church, and are consequently very anxious about what the immediate future may produce, yet let them, while doing *their* best to

avert the evils they fear, at the same time trust in God with all their hearts for a happy issue out of all their afflictions. God has His own way of teaching and training His people. Already the silver in the cloud is seen in the unity of Protestants of this country, and in the imposing spectacle of one of the most democratic movements the world has ever witnessed in the banding together of landlord and tenant, farmer and labourer, capitalist and worker, the man of business and the man of leisure, high and low, rich and poor against what they regard as a common enemy. The present trouble has made the most careless and indifferent think and act, and take a more serious view of life and its responsibilities, and for this let us be thankful. The ground is being prepared for the seed of the Word of God. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth" to the end that they may serve Him more faithfully and enjoy Him more fully. The principles of our Church have been tried, and we know them to be sound; they have stood the test of reason, and have approved themselves to the conscience and the heart. If we are alive to our opportunities, and realize how much the world stands in need of the true bread of life, which it is the prime function of the Christian Church to supply, then we should take new heart for the future, and resolve to play a fuller part in the deep affairs of human life. The call comes loudly to us as ministers and people to do our share of the work committed to us with all lowliness and sincerity; so with deep sympathy for each other's aims and anxieties, and with high resolves to make the best of life, let us enter upon the New Year, and force it, under the blessing of Almighty God, to yield a rich and precious harvest to the delight of men and to the glory of God.

By Rev. G. J. Slipper.

With the passing of another year, we are naturally constrained to look forward to the future and backward over the past. The future, with its promise and its opportunity, is in-

separably bound to the past; and we owe a duty to ourselves, as well as to our Church, to learn the relative value of both, and try, if necessary, to improve upon what has already been attained, or fit our plans to changing conditions.

Thus, in considering the outlook of our Church, it is essential for us to take heed of its past traditions.

There are some people who get very impatient when such a suggestion is made, and complain that the tendency has been to rest too much upon the past. Be that as it may, we must never forget that we have inherited a splendid heritage, of which we ought to be very proud. Behind us are great and inspiring traditions which, the more we learn to understand them, cannot fail to evoke a deeper loyalty and a larger effort on our part. In the humble opinion of the writer, we have not given half enough thought concerning the rock from which we were hewn, otherwise we should not have to lament the very slow progress that attends our efforts in this day of opportunity.

The history of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church is a great one, and should evoke in every adherent, both ministerial and lay, a spirit of endeavour no less earnest than that of those who in the past, amidst difficulties and fiercest controversy, maintained the right of private judgment and freedom of thought. As one of our modern preachers has well said, "The traditions we inherit were formed in an atmosphere of freedom and under a belief that growth and development are good. They were the creation of living hearts and earnest minds, who worshipped God and sought for truth with free and open spirits. They worked under the conditions of their time, fearlessly following the light." Truly so; and it is because of their fearlessness in this aim that our Church to-day lives as a witness to their efforts, unfettered by creed and actuated by the spirit of Christ.

What is the outlook, with such a heritage as that, we may ask? It seems to me that it is bright with hope and promise, if we are loyal to our

opportunity. It is often predicted that our Church has had its day and fulfilled its part in leavening the thought of the age, and that in course of time others will be just as liberal in their religious ideas as we have been. What a foolish prediction that is ! as unworthy as it is foolish. For if we have fulfilled any part at all in proclaiming a gospel of freedom, surely this is a call to us to continue good work, well done.

We should not be true to the best traditions of our Church if we looked complacently upon our progress ; but there is great hope in the fact that the spirit which actuated those of former generations is not dead. There are still among us brave men and women to whom the progress of our Church is a matter of vital concern. We think of those to be found in all our Churches who have stood firm to the principles of our faith and found consolation in the good tidings which it proclaims. It is for the younger generation to carry forward this spirit of loyalty into the future.

New opportunities are before us that call for our response. The signs of the times portend hopes that augur well for our Church in the future if only its adherents are faithful to the demands. It is said that the minds of men in regard to religion cannot be bound by the old fetters, and if this be so, then let us go forward with new purpose, and resolve to meet the growing demands for a faith like unto that we profess and advocate.

Those who have eyes to read the signs of the times, and ears to hear the appeal that is being made, cannot surely be indifferent to the opportunity. There is increasing need for a true missionary spirit that shall never cease to proclaim the message of God's love, the leadership of Jesus Christ, and the brotherhood of man, and in so far as we are true and responsive, the outlook of our Church is bright and promising and hopeful, and its ideal worthy of attainment. May we all be faithful to our heritage, and press on toward the mark of our high calling as those who

"Looking sunward, and with faces golden
Speak to each other softly of a hope."

By Rev. H. J. Rossington, M.A., B.D.

In speaking of "Our Church," we would not forget that the particular organisation implied is but a part of a larger unity, the Church of Christ, and that the latter is subsidiary to something much greater than itself, viz., the Christian religion. Rather is such relationship emphasised at the outset in order to guard against misunderstanding. It is with the Church, as the instrument of religion, that we are concerned. How far is it efficient for accomplishing the task imposed upon it ? Such a question, of course, is one for the Church as a whole, as well as for every section of it. Further, the problems which here call for consideration and solution are those of the Church, and not those which characterise unorganised religion. Thus, when we read of declining Church membership, of growing indifference to religious observance, we at once perceive their importance for all persons who believe that, while religion may and does exist outside the Church, yet, to do its perfect work, and usher in the Kingdom of God upon earth, the religion of Christ needs a fitting and efficient instrument. This conviction is warranted alike by history and by experience. The craving for Christian worship and the natural tendency to associate for the attainment of moral and spiritual ends originated the Church, and are responsible for its persistence. Why, then, is it losing touch with those to whom religion still appeals so strongly ? For is it not a fact that, despite the inability of the Church to hold its own in these modern times, no one questions the real and abiding appeal of religion to the native instincts of man ? If we account for the falling off by a reference to creeds no longer authoritative or attractive, we simply supply an answer for other Christians without finding one for ourselves. Our religious services are not supported as they should be ; our Church membership is not proportionate to the number of persons who approve our principles. It does not get rid of these facts to claim—as

is not infrequently done—that our religious influence as a Christian community is greater than its limited membership would seem to indicate. That may well be true, without touching the real issue, viz.:—The Church can only progress in so far as it renders itself more and more efficient, and adapts itself ever more perfectly to the needs and conditions of to-day. To lose touch with modern life, to be in a backwater, rather than to be in the full stream of progress, is a sign of ineffectiveness—a clear indication that any Church so circumstanced is no fitting instrument of a vital religion such as the world wants.

Is that our condition? It is easy to see why it should not be so. We owe no slavish adherence to the past, neither as regards the substance of our faith nor the forms in which it finds expression. We believe that God still reveals Himself to the sincere, seeking soul; that salvation is no selfish end, but the outcome of whole-hearted service for God and for man; that a Christ-like character is as potent a factor in the world's redemption as ever it was. If these truths claim us, individually and collectively, then there can be no question that a Church which exists for their realisation has a supremely important part to play. How is it to be accomplished? By the solemn re-consecration of ourselves to the work of God's Kingdom, by the application of our best thought and endeavour to the perfecting of our Church as the instrument of Christ's religion, and by the readiness to surrender all that we have and are to its worship and work. Furthermore, we must welcome every opportunity of co-operating with others attracted by like ideals and engaged in like service. The outlook for isolated, sporadic efforts is likely to become perceptibly blacker in the future. In every department of life the need for co-operation is being emphasised, and in none more than in that of religion. So far as it depends upon ourselves, we shall encourage it more consistently within, as well as welcome it more markedly without, our own Church. Thus, with a greater efficiency in our

methods, and an ever wider unity as our hope and aim, we shall labour on in freedom and in the faith that we are bringing nearer the dawn of that day when the kingdoms of the world shall become the Kingdom of our God and of his Christ.

By Rev. J. Worthington, B.A.

I am very glad to respond to the invitation of the Editor to write a few lines on the outlook for the Non-Subscribing Church. I believe, on the whole, it is hopeful and encouraging. On every side we may observe a growing dissatisfaction with dogmatic forms of religion and an eagerness to adopt, in fact if not in name, the principle for which our Church stands. Men to-day want to know the truth which is to set them free, and they are beginning to realise that, before they can win this higher spiritual freedom, they must first win their intellectual freedom—freedom in matters of belief. The traditional doctrines of the Church in regard to the Bible, Revelation, Inspiration, and the like are rapidly giving way before the march of Biblical and historical criticism, and creed-bound as the "orthodox" Church is, it cannot officially offer any revised form of faith in harmony with modern thought and feeling. Here is the opportunity of the Non-Subscribing Church. It is free to meet the modern need, and it may boldly undertake to do so, not for the sake of any mere denominational triumph, but in order to promote Christian truth and the Christian life among men. Within our own Church there are encouraging signs. The fact that during the last three years we have been able to draw together into one Church Body all the congregations in the North of Ireland and form a Sustentation Fund shows there is a good deal of enthusiasm and generous self-forgetfulness amongst us, and should for ever put to silence the false prophets and the pessimists who talk of the extinction of the Church (was not the same thing prophesied fifty years ago, Mr. Editor?) within the next half century.

There are, of course, as in all denominations to-day, discouraging features. There is the difficulty of winning for the Church the loyalty and the love of the younger generation. And it must be confessed the difficulty is not least with some of the more earnest-minded among them. One ardent young social reformer said to me a short time ago, that in the course of a few years the "world" would have developed so far in moral achievement that the Christian Church would be left far behind, and be clearly seen to be what in his view it is already a monument of superstition and worldliness. Rather an optimistic forecast, one thought, of the future of the "world," but it was not difficult to see that what he had in his mind was really a desire to challenge the moral earnestness of the Church to-day. Another difficulty is created by the peculiar point of view from which many people regard the Church. They appear to assume the Church exists simply for the sake of the minister. If they go to Church it is "to support the minister"; if they subscribe to its funds it is "to maintain the minister," and so forth and so on. You might suppose church buildings, congregations, funds of all kinds were to be maintained merely to keep in existence a body of men known as ministers of religion. And, if the truth is to be stated, we ministers are not without responsibility for such a point of view. Perhaps we have ourselves regarded the Church in that light, looked upon it as the field in which we are to win our "success and reputation." Indeed it is to be feared that this view is not discouraged, to put it mildly, by a certain type of theological college. But surely we have not so learned Christ. Ministers exist for the sake of the Church, and the Church exists first and last for the promotion of religious life and fellowship.

I should like briefly to offer three suggestions to those interested in the future of the Non-Subscribing Church. First of all, as I hinted at the beginning, we need a *development* in Christian doctrine. I have emphasised the word development, and by that I mean that

what is needed is not a mere repudiation of so-called orthodoxy, but an attempt to bring the truth that is in it up to our modern requirements. Some of the doctrines of "orthodoxy" are merely instances of arrested development. In the second place we need a revival of Bible study, and along modern lines. Bible-reading, we are told, is steadily declining as a religious exercise. So much the worse then, we may promptly add, for our religion. The Bible is a religious classic, and cannot be neglected without detriment to religion. And the light recently thrown upon it from so many different quarters has made it more valuable and fascinating than ever. We see in it now, and it is from this point of view we need to read it, a record of the *progressive* revelation of God's attitude to men in the life of the Hebrew people, and the value of such a record for religious faith and edification, apart from the intrinsic worth of its noblest passages, is immeasurable. In the third place, and, most important of all, we need to cultivate amongst us the spirit of co-operation, a feeling for the *common good* of the Church. Our numerical strength and the organization that holds us together offer in this respect a unique opportunity.

Martineau once said that "the proper use of organization is to direct into proper channels and reduce to a steady and calculable power an exuberant energy and wild force already existing." Well, we have our organization, and the wild force and exuberant energy are coming.



THE BOOK OF THE ROYAL BELFAST ACADEMICAL INSTITUTION.

A REVIEW.

The centenary volume of the Royal Belfast Academical Institution,* which has just appeared, is a credit alike to the Governors of the School, to those entrusted with its compilation, and to the publishers. It will be treasured

* Belfast: Messrs. M'Caw, Stevenson, & Orr.
21s. net.

with affection by many who have been educated at the old school, and will be read with interest by descendants and relatives of former scholars. It is, moreover, a valuable contribution to the history of education in Ireland, and especially in Ulster, giving the mind of the reader vistas of the past, often pleasing, though sometimes the reverse, and affording the modern educationalist valuable material to aid him in making his plans for the future.

In a short review it is impossible to do full justice to the merits of the book, but we can at least call attention to some features which render it interesting and attractive.

In the opening chapter on old Belfast, Mr. John Stevenson has, in a masterly way, given us a vivid picture of the state of the town and of the life of its inhabitants one hundred years ago. He has done his work well. Of that no better proof could be advanced than the fact that, when the chapter is finished, the reader longs for more and turns the page with regret that it is ended.

Mr. Joseph R. Fisher, in his sketch of education in Ulster, has reached the high standard which those who knew him as Editor of the *Northen Whig* would have expected of him. He has not only given an excellent bird's-eye view of the history of education in Ulster, but he has also brought forward some facts unknown to the present generation, and has put them in possession of valuable information to which hitherto they have been strangers. With the Queen's University of Belfast, in a state of vigorous activity after the vicissitudes through which university education in Ireland has passed during the last sixty years, it is interesting to look back and see that one hundred and fourteen years ago a similar university for Ulster was nearly being established at Armagh. Had it been founded, what an advance in learning might by this time have taken place in Ulster! How lamentable to think of the causes by which the aims of its high-minded promoters were brought to naught! Primate Newcome's selfishness and sectarian bigotry

prevented the Presbyterians of Ulster from obtaining the benefits of a university education in their native land, which his enlightened predecessor, Primate Robinson, had desired them to have. Too often, in the history of Christianity, have ministers of religion forgotten the main purpose of their existence, and tried to become despots of men's intellects and tyrants over the human mind. Under Newcome's influence the Duke of Portland not only refused "to give premiums for the profession of other religious persuasions" which differed from the Established Church, but he even desired to limit the possibilities of education in Ireland, so that "the better order of people of that kingdom" should be driven "to receive a part of their education either at the schools or universities" of England. This political design soon received the stamp of fashion and diffused its influence downwards from the aristocracy through the wealthier business classes in ever-widening circles. As a result, many an Irish boy has at an early age been drafted from his wholesome home surroundings to an English boarding-school, and has returned with an imperfect education, deficient morals, and a broken constitution. Out of the evil, however, some good arose. The pupils and fellow-countrymen of David Manson "did not despair of their ideal, and they resolutely undertook to carry it into execution with or without the help of Government." They thus founded the Royal Academical Institution, an undenominational school in which Protestant and Catholic boys were educated together, and a well-equipped college for the education of Presbyterian ministers, "but whose chairs and classes were to be open to all comers, without distinction of creed."

To Mr. John H. Robb great credit is due for the way in which he has handled "The Story of the Institution." He gives a brief account of the early difficulties, financial and otherwise, which had to be overcome before the School and College could be got to work. Then comes the political dinner, which

gave offence to the Government and caused the withdrawal of the grant for several years. In spite of all discouragements, the friends of the Institution rallied round it, and pluckily supported it, and the Synod of Ulster recognised the General Certificate of the Collegiate Department as equivalent to the degree of a university. It thus kept on steadily winning fame and favour until Dr. Henry Cooke came on the scene. The story of how he endeavoured to turn the undenominational college into a sectarian seminary of the narrowest type is well and fairly told. Animated by the spirit of priestly intolerance, which has been so often exhibited in the history of the Roman Catholic and of the Anglican Churches, Cooke did his best to make theological opinion rather than learning the test for the teacher. Happily, in this he did not altogether succeed. Nevertheless, his influence was baneful to the school and college, and prevented the rapid development which would otherwise have taken place. The Institution only just escaped being made an appendage of the narrower and more unprogressive portion of the Presbyterian Church. As it was, the success of both school and college was marred by the controversies which arose about the orthodoxy or heterodoxy of the professors. Not only did the Synod of Ulster, the Reformed Synod, and the Secession Synod give the Joint Boards continual trouble about the professors appointed to teach their own students, but they even objected to the request of the Association of Non-Subscribing Presbyterians "for accommodation for two Professors of Divinity in the Institution and seats on the Faculty for three Professors." With this last "flicker" in 1841, the controversy ended, for the establishment of the Queen's University in 1845 diverted the attention of the theologians from the Institution.

The glorious dream of unsectarian education has not yet come true, but in the Institution we have the best attempt to realise it with which we are acquainted. Round it have grown up schools more or less denominational in

their constitution. The national school system of the country has been sectarianised. The Roman Catholic lead has been followed by Protestants in the matter of education. Still the grand old school continues its triumphal march, calling to its ranks the youth of every creed.

Much of the book is rightly taken up with biographical sketches of masters and distinguished scholars, the photographs of whom will recall many pleasant memories. Nor has the athletic side of school life been neglected. Whether a man's interest lies in learning or in games, it has been well catered for.

A feature of great value in the book is the list of names of students who received the "General Certificate," 1817-1839, and of scholars of the School whose names appear on the roll. The inclusion of the names of parents and guardians is an important feature. It renders identification so much easier for those interested in biographical research. The perusal of these lists brings up mingled feelings of pleasure and sorrow. Some names awaken happy memories and recall successful and honourable lives; others remind us of early death or failure in the drama of life. From its very inception members of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church have been interested in the Institution. Dr. William Drennan gave the opening address in 1814. Many others of our communion held distinguished places on its teaching staff, and a large company of Non-Subscribing scholars has been enrolled in its ranks. All this makes the book welcome to us, while its record of a century of struggle for unsectarian education, so dear to our forefathers and to us, enhances its value.

Reference must be made to the numerous excellent illustrations, which add interest to its pages. The print is excellent. The paper, the binding, and the general style of the work are well worthy of the great firm of M'Caw, Stevenson, & Orr.

JOHN CAMPBELL.

LESSON NOTES FOR TEACHERS.

By Rev. E. H. Pickering, B.A.

STORIES FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT.

A New Year's Lesson. Read Numbers xiii. 17-31. *Memory verse*, Numbers xiii. 20—"Be ye of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land."

Introduction. The new year is like an undiscovered country, and we are like explorers. Knowing little or nothing of what lies before, we have to march on, our business being to bring of the fruit of the land, that is, to have some achievement worth showing as the result of our adventure. We are, therefore, in the position of the Israelite spies, who had to go and explore the Promised Land.

Points. 1. *The Call.* We all have to respond. Nothing we do can stop our journey through another year. Like St. Paul, we are called to press on, desiring nothing less than to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. Thus our journey is not to be blindly undertaken, for, although the way is difficult and dark, a light shines over the path of him who fixes his eyes on the true end of life—perfect goodness.

2. *The need for clear purpose.* Unless we really have our eyes fixed on the purpose of life, we shall stumble and wander far from the right path. We must not be like the man who, going on a long journey, loaded himself so heavily with all sorts of things (these represent desires, passions, and interests) that he was completely bowed down, and could not see where he was going. To see the light ahead, we have to walk uprightly, caring only for one thing—the right, and casting aside our little pet selfishnesses and follies.

3. *The need for courage.* Some of the spies in our story were frightened because there were dangers to be overcome before they could do well in the promised land. "Oh, it is a very nice country," they said, "but such terrible difficulties to meet." Caleb and Joshua, however, bravely said, "It is a fine country, and that is enough: let us go

and possess it." That is the right spirit. No good thing can be got without fighting for it. To become good ourselves, to travel successfully through the coming years, we must be bravely prepared to face hardships. We need the spirit which has inspired such gallant pioneers and explorers as Capt. Scott and his little band of heroes.

Gideon: the victory of the brave three hundred. Read Judges vi. 11-15; vii. 1-22. *Memory verse*, Judges vii. 7.

Introduction. At this time the Israelites were over-run by the Midianites. This lesson shows the advantage which a good cause has over a bad. Gideon was fighting for his country and his God. The Midianites were invaders.

Points. 1. *The humility of great men is again shown* (vi. 15). Gideon had no confidence in himself; but his strength came when he put confidence in God.

2. *No use for fearful men.* They only hinder. If we would fight for God, we must be brave ourselves and choose brave helpers.

3. *Gideon's clever stratagem.* The enemy thought it must be a very mighty host, which had so many trumpeters. Stand firm, without hesitation, e.g., David and Goliath. The enemy were afraid, and therefore brought about their own defeat. An excellent illustration of this fact appeared in the newspapers a short time ago, when they told how a plucky boy scout pursued two thieves and made them give up their booty. The thieves never dreamed the boy was alone, and thought a great crowd must be following close behind. Hence their fear overcame them. "Conscience makes cowards of us all," if it is a *bad* conscience.

4. *A few resolute men* can save a whole nation, e.g., the story of William Lloyd Garrison, who began his anti-slavery crusade in America, with almost the whole nation against him. Yet he won.

Minor points. 1. The angel of God—God himself, or, shall we say, the divine spirit speaking within?

2. Gideon had to thresh his wheat

in secret (in the wine press) for fear the enemy should seize it.

Jephthah. The Tragedy of a Rash Vow. Read Judges x. 6-16; xi. 29-40. *Memory verse*, Judges xi. 30.

Introduction. Once again the Israelites, weak in their faith, were weak against the invader. Like many other people, they repented under suffering, and God proved Himself ever merciful.

Points. 1. *Rash vows are like gambling.* In the first place Jephthah was wrong in thinking that God could be tempted to do right by offering him a sacrifice. God is always just, and needs no vows like Jephthah's. Secondly, it is both foolish and wicked to make rash promises which we can never fulfil. The fact that we may be in a fix is no excuse, e.g., story of King Harold and Duke William. The story is that, when Harold was shipwrecked in Normandy, Duke William gave him ships and liberty, on the understanding that Harold should help him to the English throne. Harold could not possibly have fulfilled his rash promise, for the English people expected him to fight against the Duke, as indeed he had to. So let us beware of crying: "I would do *anything* to get this or that," when all the while we know we would not. It is much better to be simply truthful. Jephthah should simply have vowed to serve God faithfully. On making vows, see Jesus' teaching, Matthew v. 33-37.

2. *Jephthah's honesty.* This was not foolish. The vow was foolish. He felt himself bound to do what he had promised God. We, however, have a deeper trust in God's love.

3. *The daughter's sublime obedience.* She, too, believed a vow too sacred to be broken. So she gave herself to save her father's honour.

The Story of Samuel. 1. The Dedication. Read I. Samuel i. 20-28. *Memory verse*, I. Samuel i. 28.

Introduction. Other judges followed Jephthah, notably Samson. Then we come to the judgeship of Eli, who was also high priest at Shiloh. Eli and Samuel were both judges and priests, and we see that Jehovah was worshipped both as king and God.

Points. 1. *Shiloh.* At this time Shiloh was the centre of Israel's religious life.

2. *The deeply religious love of the Jews for their children.* Samuel is said to mean "asked of God" or "granted to God." This love is shown in such stories as those of David and Absalom. Hagar and Ishmael, Joseph and Jacob. The Jews loved their children because they believed them to be gifts from God. Thus in the story of Job the crowning calamity is the loss of his children, and the crowning happiness their restoration. It is for children to prove themselves divine gifts. Note Jesus' words: "Suffer the little children," etc. This intense parental love led the Jews to believe in God as a Father, e.g., Psalm ciii. 13—"Like as a Father."

3. *The Dedication.* In her deep love and gratitude, Hannah felt that the only fitting service for her child was God's. Like Abraham, she gave him up as the dearest offering she could bring. The Spartan mothers used to give up their sons to their country, and as they marched forth to war the mothers bravely cried: "with your shield or on it," meaning that they must never disgrace themselves by flinging the shield away to run, but must rather die and be carried on it. Dedication to God does not merely mean being a priest or minister. Every life should be dedicated, for dedication means living and working according to the very best of our abilities. Whatever is worth doing is worth doing well. A man who had made himself great was once taunted with the fact of his having cleaned boots when he was a boy. His answer was: "Did I clean them well?" That was all he cared, and that proved his greatness.



Reports.

Ballee.—At a largely attended congregational meeting of the above, held on the 14th ult., the Rev. Joseph Henry Bibby made the generous announcement that he had bought out from the Irish Land Commissioners their claim

on 5 acres 1 rood 15 perches of land on which the church property stands, viz., the grounds, fields, etc., thus making the church property self-contained and absolutely rent free for ever. The new trust is for "the use and benefit of the ministers, and none others, in succession, so long as they are connected with the Non-Subscribing Church of Ireland. But if at any time the minister of Ballee should cease to act as a minister in connection with the Non-Subscribing Church of Ireland, then during such time as said minister shall so cease to act, or should the congregation of Ballee cease from any cause as a worshipping society, the said lands should be held in trust for the Sustentation Fund of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church to be applied towards augmenting the stipend of ministers belonging to said Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church." On the proposition of Mr. J. D. Stitt, seconded by Mr. Adam Kelly, a hearty vote of thanks was accorded to Mr. Bibby not only for this, his latest gift, but also for his former generous act in providing for the deficit on the manse building and general renovation of Meeting House Fund. Mr. Bibby gracefully acknowledged the thanks, and hoped that what he had done would prove worthy of emulation. Mr. Thomas G. Stewart having been appointed trustee in place of the late Mr. W. Savage, the proceedings terminated. The trustees are now Messrs. Robert Caven and Thomas George Stewart.

* *

Ballyhemlin.—On November 26th, at the Orange Hall, Ballyhalbert, a lecture was given by the Rev. John Barron, in connection with the Meeting House Guild, entitled, "The Revolution of 1688."

* *

Banbridge.—The Annual Soiree, Xmas Tree, and Prize Distribution in connection with the Sunday School took place at the Dunbar Schools, on Tuesday evening, December 30th. A large company of scholars and friends were present. The proceedings commenced with a tea, which was much

enjoyed. Next, upwards of fifty prizes, in the form of valuable books, were distributed by Mrs. A. M'Cammon to scholars who had attended regularly throughout the year. Afterwards the good things adorning the Xmas Tree were disposed of, each one present receiving a gift. Games were then indulged in by the young people until the time came to disperse. The meeting was a complete success, both in regard to attendance and enthusiasm. The minister expressed the regret of all present at the absence, through indisposition, of Mr. John Smyth, of Milltown, a life-long and devoted worker in both church and school. We wish him a speedy recovery, and hope he will soon be able to take his place among us again.

* *

Belfast : First Church.—On the Sunday evening before Christmas, Bach's "Christmas Oratorio" (Parts I. and II.) were rendered by an augmented choir in the presence of a crowded congregation. The fact that the same selections had been given earlier in the Ulster Hall, at a Philharmonic concert, was partly responsible for the great interest taken in the musical service in Rosemary Street, but the very favourable notices of the Organist's work which had appeared in the Press were also responsible. Certainly they were justified, for a splendid rendering was given of a great work, this being due to the very careful and sympathetic preparation given by the Organist (Mr. Wilfred Layton, F.R.C.O., A.R.C.M.). Both in the solo parts, as well as in the choruses and the chorals, the members of the Choir were heard to full advantage, while the very arduous work at the organ could not have been more in keeping with the spirit of Bach's music.

* *

Dromore.—A two days' Cake Fair and Sale of Work, in connection with the above Church, was opened in the Town Hall, Dromore, on Thursday, December 11th. The object was to raise funds to liquidate a debt which was necessarily incurred in repairing

the church property. Rev. A. Davison presided, and, in his opening remarks, said he felt it an honour and a privilege to be in a position that afternoon of taking the chair on that most important occasion. The present effort was the outcome of a desire expressed at the annual meeting some six weeks ago that something should be done to put their finances in a more satisfactory condition. During the year certain alterations and improvements had been carried out in connection with the congregational property, involving considerable expense, and it was felt that by an effort of this kind they might raise as much money as would enable them to wipe out their present liabilities, and, in addition, to put a little aside for any contingencies that might arise. The enterprise, he might say, was largely a ladies' one, and they had thrown themselves into it with an enthusiasm and a determination which he thought deserved the highest praise, with the result that they saw around them a varied assortment of goods which they were ready to dispose of at prices reasonable to themselves. It was his duty and privilege to introduce to them that afternoon a lady who bore an honoured name, particularly in the Churches of their fellowship, and on behalf of the congregation he extended to her a very hearty and cordial welcome to Dromore. They appreciated very highly indeed her kindness in coming amongst them that day at so much inconvenience to herself to assist them in that effort. He had very great pleasure in calling upon Mrs. Campbell to open the Fair. Mrs. Campbell, on coming forward, was received with prolonged applause. She said—Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, I desire to thank you all very heartily for the very kind invitation you extended to me to come here to-day. I thank you for the kind way in which you have received me. It is delightful to see so many happy faces and to see so many good and tempting articles. It is a proof of your loyalty to your Church, and I hope that the Sale will be a great success, and will be worthy of the efforts you have all put forth to

make it a success. I have much pleasure in declaring the Sale open. Mr. Baxter, B.A., solicitor, in proposing a vote of thanks to Mrs. Campbell for her kindness in coming there to declare the Sale of Work open, said—Once upon a time, as all good stories open, Samuel Rodgers wrote to the late Countess of Dufferin an invitation to dinner, and his letter of invitation and her reply were both very short. Rodgers wrote—"Dear Lady Dufferin, will you dine with me on Wednesday?" Lady Dufferin replied—"Won't I just." He was reading these letters lately, and they reminded him of Mrs. Campbell's reply to their invitation to come and open their Sale of Work. He was sure they all felt greatly indebted to her for coming there that day and showing her interest in their Church in Dromore. He had great pleasure in moving that their best thanks should be given to Mrs. Campbell for her kindness in coming there and declaring the Sale open. Mr. C. Miniss seconded the motion, which was carried by acclamation, and suitably conveyed by the reverend Chairman. Miss Dorothy Mulligan, on behalf of the congregation, presented Mrs. Campbell with a lovely bouquet of choice flowers. Mrs. Campbell having returned thanks for the vote of thanks and beautiful gift, the stallholders proceeded with the sales. In connection with the Fair the following competitions were adjudged:—For best sultana cake (open only to pupils attending cookery class)—1st prize, valuable lace collar; 2nd prize, lace collar; 3rd prize, tortoise shell hand comb—1, Miss L. Edgar; 2, Miss Corry; 3, Miss Lavery. For best cherry cake—1st prize, pair of vases, 2nd prize, pair of vases—1, Mrs. Herron, Rathfriland; 2, Miss Thompson, Newry. For best seed cake—1st prize, porcelain flower pot; 2nd prize, pair of vases—1, Miss Thompson, Newry; 2, Miss M. Jardine. For best soda cake—1st prize, silk muffler; 2nd prize, box of toilet soap—1, Mrs. Bob M'Candless; 2nd, Mrs. Ward. Best pair hand-knitted socks—1st prize, 5s.; 2nd prize, 2s. 6d.—1, Miss Florrie M'Candless; 2, Mrs. Montgomery.

Moneyrea.—The Annual Xmas Party held under the auspices of the Sabbath School took place on Wednesday evening, December 24th—Xmas Eve. The night proving crisp and dry contributed materially to the largeness of the audience, upwards of two hundred and fifty sitting down to tea. In keeping with established custom, the school-rooms, old and new, were seasonably decorated with holly and mottoes and festoons, and, to the delight of young and old, there figured also a Xmas Tree—the gift of City Councillor William Bennett—gaily dressed with numberless toys of varied kind and colour. To a much appreciated programme the scholars contributed five choruses, the Misses M. and B. Kennedy two piano-forte solos and a duet; Miss I. M'K. Turkington a humorous reading, Miss Fanny Lappin a couple of songs (Irish melodies), and Master Willie Gordon four humorous songs. Mr. A. Kennedy Stewart, J.P., after a kindly and helpful address to the scholars, presented upwards of fifty prize books to the successful ones for attendance and class work during Session 1913. No less than twenty-four of the prizes given going to scholars for unbroken attendance. The rest of the evening was spent in merry-making and dancing, and the small hours of morning were well advanced before the happy throng dispersed to the strains of "Auld Lang Syne."

Echoes.

"Bookman," in a fine estimate of the R.B.A. Institution's centenary volume, which appeared in the *Northern Whig*, says, among other things:—As if a quarrel with the Government were not a sufficiently heavy handicap, the Institution found itself embroiled in the fiercest theological controversy that ever raged in Ulster. It had always prided itself, as it still does, on its freedom from any tinge of sectarianism; but by an unlucky chance it became the lists in which for almost twenty years Arians and Calvinists fought desperately for supremacy. Mr. Robb, in his "Story of the Institution," has made

out of these forgotten struggles a narrative of absorbing interest, and his chapters are a notable contribution to the history of Ulster. But he does not disguise his view that, important as the issues were to Irish Presbyterianism, it was nothing short of a tragedy that the Institution should have been selected as a battlefield; and for that the main responsibility must rest with Dr. Cooke, who was from the first the aggressor. It is not a little ironical that the statue of the great controversialist should have been placed in front of the gates of the Institution, though I have heard one who knew Cooke and did not love him overmuch declare that it was grimly appropriate that in death, as in life, he should have his back turned to the school. The quarrel did not merely rage amongst leaders; it grew to such a pitch that students became active partisans; and Mr. Robb tells us that at the "Common Hall," held on Saturday, those present, instead of deriving edification from the prayers, were more occupied in hunting for Arian heresies.

* *

"Indeed it is amazing how much greater value the majority of men attach to their privileges when compelled to maintain them in the midst of trials than they do when permitted to enjoy them in the midst of security and repose. Our venerated ancestors crowded into private dwellings, and often raised their solemn hymns of praise under the dark canopy of night, whilst in our own days of liberty and peace and religious encouragement some of their descendants never enter the House of the Living God, and multitudes are found to be only occasional and careless worshippers!"

—Dr. Montgomery.

BAPTISM.

M'KEOWN—On December 26th, Martha, daughter of Arthur and Elizabeth M'Keown, of Park View Terrace, Woodvale Road. Born December 14th, 1913.

MARRIAGES.

BELL—O'NEILL—On November 25th, 1913, at Ballyhemlin, Robert Bell to Mary Elizabeth O'Neill.

KENNEDY—DAVIDSON—November 29th, at the First Presbyterian Church, Rosemary Street, Belfast, by the Rev. H. J. Rossington, M.A., B.D., Edwin Riddell, youngest son of the late William Kennedy and Mrs. Kennedy, Freshford, Knock, to Mary Taylor, daughter of James Davidson, Oakley, Knock.

DEATH.

DAVIDSON—On December 25th, at her residence, Oakley, King's Road, Knock, Elizabeth Chambers, wife of James Davidson. Interred City Cemetery, Falls Road, December 27th.

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